

An Open Letter
to my Fellow-members of
The Theosophical Society

LETTER NO. 5

APRIL 26th, 1939

DEAR BRETHREN,

In my last open letter I said I should be extensively quoting from Dr. Besant in the letter following. I should like you to go back into the period of 1913, 1914, 1915, when Dr. Besant herself gave us her unique leadership. If you will read what she wrote in those days, you will see what was the spirit of those times. That spirit has to be reproduced today. It is an exactly comparable period.

Running through the whole of this early literature there is the theme of WORK. She makes it perfectly clear that while we must fulfil our obligations as members of those organizations to which we belong, *the Work matters more*. That might well be a slogan for every one of us. Time and again she says that we can well let our progress, our personal growth, go. It will

be safe in the hands of the Masters. We must throw ourselves into the work.

Here is a wonderful passage of hers in December 1914 :

Let yourselves go and give yourselves to the Work. Our "forefathers' intent upon the welfare of the world, obtained liberation." Nothing can stop the liberation of the inner man ; nothing of outer work ; meditation is no more holy than platform work ; it is the motive that sanctifies the action, and if you sit for hours in meditation, thinking only of your own growth, you grow more slowly than a man of the outer world who knows nothing of meditation, but is unselfishly endeavouring to serve his time and his race. The Masters need every man that is willing to give himself for the work. We have had time to think of our own development and our own growth ; and now the time has come when that is to be thrown aside, and we are asked to act and not simply to grow ; we have grown more rapidly for the sake of service, and if we do not render it when it is asked for, then we are ill repaying the blessing of the Masters, which during all these years has been poured out upon us.

Such surely is the theme for every member of every Section—the theme of work, co-operation, helpfulness, loyalty, devotion, following the leader in these times when the world is in its present distress. Dr. Besant says in a very wonderful sentence : "*Work is wanted,*

otherwise there will be nothing left to work for."

That is profoundly true today. It is beautifully and truly put; and it is incumbent upon every single member to see what part he has to play in this work.

Another phrase gives us some idea of the work which she held to be of uttermost importance in February 1916 :

Two demands upon us have now been made, both having one result, the satisfactory shortening of the War. We have been told of two ways in which we may help to do this. I give them in the order they were told to us. First by aiding India to gain an immediate promise of Self-Government from Britain, this being one of the changes the War is to make possible. Secondly by using our thought-force to bring about victory for the Allied Nations, since they stand for the ideals which govern Divine Will in evolution.

From this extract you will note that the problem of India is not merely her own personal and individual problem, nor is it a problem merely for the British Empire. It is a problem for the whole world. You will note that the obtaining of the freedom of India was one of the ways in which the World War might be shortened. A War such as took place between 1914 and 1918 must needs be of world-wide significance.

We certainly have not yet achieved Self-Government for India, and even though there must needs be many of us who live far away from India, India must not be a matter of indifference to us. And we should do well to realize that if today the world is on the threshold of a war, it is in part because India has not yet won that release which it was hoped she would achieve as a result of the last great war.

Then we have another direction from Dr. Besant : To use "our thought-force to bring about victory for the Allied Nations, since they stand for the ideals which govern Divine Will in evolution." Today we have no less, even more, to stand for Democracy, for Freedom against dictatorships, tyranny, oppression. We have to stand for Freedom, be it the freedom of our own or any other country, and the Theosophist will not confine his ministrations to his own country alone. He will realize that the whole world is a great Brotherhood and he will try to help everywhere. So our work becomes perfectly clear and easy to understand. Our business is to support and stand for Democracy, for Freedom and Order, for all those qualities which enable the individual and the State to grow

according to their respective statures, and to work especially for India's freedom, because upon that freedom depends much of the release of spiritual power which the whole world needs and lacks at the present time.

There is one distinction which Dr. Besant always emphasized ; we must distinguish between Governments and peoples. While it may be necessary for us all to condemn various Governments in certain directions, we must always feel that the peoples are outside this condemnation, because we have every good reason to believe heartily in the people of every country. Whatever difficulties they may have, under whatever restrictions they may live, however much they may be imprisoned or shackled, still the spirit of Freedom dwells in all peoples. This is the hope of the evolution of the future. Whatever we may do by way of condemnation, I think it is vital always to speak a word of reverence for the fine qualities in every nation, subjugated though that nation may actually be at the moment.

Dr Besant then tells us how early in 1912 a great Teacher, knowing what was to come both in the attacks on herself and in the terrible outer world crisis, bade her not to be troubled. And she says : " I

wondered why that was said, because I was not troubled at the time in the very least, and I wondered why I should be told not to be troubled when there was no reason for anxiety." But she realized latter that the Teacher had in mind the great war of 1914-1918 which was to come. Today we must realize the significance of this phrase: "Do not be troubled." We must not waste precious force in being troubled. Our force must be used strongly and to the utmost. It must be used for constructive work. We must not fritter it away in being nervous, anxious, or worried.

We need not bother as to *when*, still less as to *if*, victory shall come. All we have to do is to fight for victory. It will come in its own good time. However much we may be defeated today, victory will come tomorrow or some other day, and it will be the finer for the delay. Dr. Besant pointed out to us that all those forces which seemed in 1914 to be uppermost in the world—tyranny, oppression, the spirit of cruelty and persecution—and seemed about to hurl civilization down into darkness, all those forces are in fact already conquered on the inner planes. I believe that to be fundamentally true today; all the forces of

darkness are already conquered on the inner planes. She uses a beautiful phrase: "We have to conquer on the physical plane those who are already conquered in the higher worlds. Those of you who are students of the *Bhagavad-Gita* may remember that Shri Krishna urges Arjuna to go forward and to fight the embattled hosts, and that he uses a curious phrase—that these had been already slain, and therefore he was to go forth and finish the work on the physical plane."

This is a fine thought for us. The forces of darkness are already defeated. Let us finish the job. India is free within herself. Let us finish the job and make her free on the physical plane. This gives us the sense that the work is not only half, but three-quarters, seven-eighths done. We have just to give the final push that will give the victory. And with the power and force at our disposal as members of The Theosophical Society, we can strongly help to accomplish this. In every country Theosophists must fight for the Right, and in the whole world they must fight for the Right no less.

I myself feel personally that in these days it is easy to be strong. We may have

our physical and other ailments, difficulties, weaknesses, but the fact remains that it is easy to be strong somewhere within us. Because there is strength abroad within and on the physical plane, we may utilize it, gather it up, and send it forth for righteousness. And we who have so much power to contact the strength of the Elder Brethren, near as we are to Them, we can take, as it were, great masses of this strength that permeates the world and send it forth.

There should be no lethargy in any member of any Lodge. Everybody must be vital in his own way as best he can. May I assure you, you need have no anxiety about our Headquarters here at Adyar? Everything we can do we are doing. We do not shrink from any effort to help the world—not only efforts directly connected with our Theosophical work but any other efforts to stir the whole of the world to realize that this is another 1914, and we must be awake to help the world. This weekly Open Letter which goes direct to every Lodge is to try to arouse every single member to be awake in every country to the Work that needs to be done. And that little journal *Conscience* is

another effort. Whether you agree or not with this expression of conscience does not matter, so long as the motive be to give the best that can be given. Behind every paragraph and article, whether you agree or not, there is the very purest of intentions—our desire to do everything we can to awaken a World Conscience. I want all who can to help it. Do not brush it aside as if it did not concern you. Everything concerns you that is honest and sincere. We want to gather together in that journal everything that is honest, sincere, true, unselfish, so that we may help to spread these virtues abroad. Who knows, if we are able to produce a good journal, it may some day be blessed. There it is—a potential channel of a certain kind of force and we want it to be used. I should like to see every Lodge subscribe to it, put it on their reading-room tables and in their Public Libraries as an honest effort towards the expression of conscience. It is honesty, sincerity, enthusiasm that matter even more than our limited conceptions of right.

In any case, we must work. We must give all we can. No one asks we should give more. But we must give all we can

to spread Theosophy, strengthen The Theosophical Society by every means in our power, to help in all its aspects The Theosophical Movement, and in doing those things which have been suggested to us as means of carrying out the Will of the Wise, as, for example, working for India's freedom, and standing for the spirit of Democracy, Freedom, Justice, Righteousness.

Indeed need we never be troubled. May I repeat that I believe it is entirely true today to say that the battle has been won on the inner planes. And however many people there were to win the battle in 1914, there are more people today whose Consciences are awakened to Truth, Justice, Brotherhood; and the army for Righteousness is an army larger than we have had before in the history of the world.

Dr. Besant explains to us how she worked. It is the way in which many of us are trying to work now. Everything goes on in the same way through crisis after crisis. She says in 1914, in the very beginning of the war :

I shall make a number of thought-forms of myself, well vitalised, and send them over there to

the scene of activity, and you can go over and look for them, and they will be sufficiently like me to be recognised and will serve all the purpose required. I cannot go to bed much before eleven, so I shall send off these thought-forms and you can go early and work with them. A thought-form will be active in proportion to the strength you put into it. Any time in the day you can send out a thought. Scattered as we are all over the world, we ought to be able to send a continual stream of quiet thought . . . Work on the mental plane to bring about a happier condition of things. Give some part of your meditation at the end, for then you are at your strongest. . .

That is how we are winning the battle on the inner planes today. I have endeavoured to show in my new little book *A Guardian Wall of Will* a way in which that work is being done now by a number of workers. We are sending out thought-forms of ourselves as best we can. We have not the power to send forth the clear-cut wonderfully vibrant and radiant thought-forms she sent out. But the thought-forms we do send out are everywhere. We have to think of all these things during the day as well as the night. We have built a little guardian wall of the will behind which people can go who need a quiet refuge. I have found if I go personally at nights and vitalize whatever I can, people come and cling to me to

escape from their trouble, difficulty and misery. To them we look like angel helpers, and if necessary we can make ourselves the conventional pair of wings. So we can help to relieve and release many. If you will read this little book, you will see what we are attempting to accomplish on every plane, to bring about a happier condition of things.

In many of our President-Mother's utterances and writings during this period, she justifies war. She refers to the fact that from the Lord Vaivasvata Manu every single one of our great Teachers on the Ruling Line has often been a soldier and led His people into the fight time after time.

I know very well that while in all probability for the Sixth Root Race there may be no further war, as our President-Mother has prophesied, in this race war is part of the plan of the Head of the Hierarchy. While it is well to have people who are conscientious objectors, those who are utterly opposed to war, as I used myself to be, we should try to learn the purpose of war in the evolutionary process. Dr. Besant makes it perfectly clear that "For us, this War—ghastly as it is in its outer aspects—is full of help

and full of promise for the future." So while we may think of the horrors and terrors of war, of all that is dreadful and ghastly in war, at the same time there is not the slightest doubt for anyone who can see that the last war with its four-year duration should have released for the future wonderful forces of which the present is not yet able to avail itself.

I think we have to learn that for this particular age war is an almost inevitable ingredient of the evolutionary process. I very much fear that this statement will be most unpalatable to all who read it. I do not say that it may not be possible for us to anticipate the future and by a great and universal Act of Tapas get entirely rid of war, even at this stage of our growth. But the probabilities are against this, and I think we should be very much wiser, and should make war much less likely, if frankly we were to prepare for war. I am quite clear in my own mind that if there had been conscription in the British Empire, there would be very much less danger of war than there is at present. Please do not think I am not aware of all the arguments against conscription. But I am looking

at the problem from the standpoint of taking into account the evolutionary ingredient of war with which we so obviously have not yet done. The war spirit is abroad, and we ought to be able to take advantage of this spirit so as the better to nullify it. I hold that this can be effected by training every citizen—boy and girl, man and woman—to know how to defend his home, and country if need be, and no less to help to defend the homes and countries of his brethren where these are wantonly attacked. Perhaps you will remember what Pythagoras said when he was addressing the people of Naxos in Sicily :

Listen, my children, to what the State should be to the good citizen. It is more than father or mother, it is more than husband and wife, it is more, than child or friend. The state is the father and mother of all, is the wife of the husband, and the husband of the wife. The family is good, and good is the joy of the man in wife and in son. But greater is the State, which is the Protector of all, without which the home would be ravaged and destroyed. Dear to the good man is the honour of the woman who bore him, dear the honour of the wife, whose children cling to his knees : but dearer should be the honour of the State, that keeps safe the wife and the child. It is the State from which comes all that makes you prosperous, and gives you beauty and safety. Within the State are built up the Arts, which

make the difference between the barbarian and the man. If the brave man dies gladly for the hearthstone, far more gladly should he die for the State."

As Dr. Besant points out, there are many things worse than war: "To my mind dishonour is worse than the death of the physical body. If I had to choose between personal dishonour and death, I should choose death. The death of the physical body from my standpoint is a very little thing. The physical body ends with death, but dishonour goes on."

Of course, you will remember that I am writing in no sense officially but rather to disclose to you what your President has in his mind as George S. Arundale. By no means am I anxious that you should agree with me. But I am naturally anxious you should understand me and know that I am not writing without having very deeply considered my words and their implications. In 1914 I was strongly a conscientious objector and I had the privilege, under the inspiration of Mr. and Mrs. Baillie-Weaver, of doing all that could be done to help the splendid citizens who had been thrown into prison and ill-treated for their Consciences' sake. But I perceived later that, while these

brethren were greatly right to object, my duty lay otherwise. So I have ceased to be a conscientious objector to war, even though I am an ardent advocate of peace.

I sincerely believe that there is no movement more potent to bring the world back to peace than The Theosophical Society. As Dr. Besant said in January 1916 :

We can help the Powers of Good by throwing all our thought and energy on the side of Right . . . The more who do this, the sooner will the struggle end. Do not say : " My endeavours are too small to count." The small *does* count, and if hundreds of thousands do this, it comes to very much. No one should think, " I am too weak to begin." There are thousands . . . and many can also influence others to do this. It would come to much force added up, if each one of you would give of your thought and force, and so add to the great reservoir from which the Masters draw. There is a possibility of bringing this struggle to an end during the next few months. It is on the balance. Use all your power of thought to bring about victory.

Let each one of us be strong and active for Righteousness throughout the world, beginning at home, but ending only with the farthest limits of our globe. So shall we give Victory to Peace and justify our membership of The Theosophical Society.

Georges S. Arundale